

September 11, 2006

I'm cute. I'm little. I'm a girl. And no matter what he says, my big brother loves me. He can't help it. I'm cute. I'm little. I'm a girl.

He's handsome. He's big. He's a boy. And nobody better mess with me because he'll protect me. He can't help it. He's handsome. He's big. He's a boy.

It didn't start out that way. In fact, I didn't live here when I was very, very little. I lived at Fenstermaker's house with my mother and my litter mates. That was okay, but I like it here better. Now.

When I first met Mama, she was visiting Fenstermaker. He kept trying to convince her to take me home that day, but she said she would have to talk it over with Apollo first. I don't know why she bothered. I know his answer was not only NO but a dirty word NO. He told me so. Several times a day for several weeks.

Anyway, Mama came back a couple of days later with a whole bunch of people to set up for a party. She played with me for a little while, but mostly I ran around checking things out while my mother and my litter mates covered in the basement.

The next day, Mama came late to the party. There were lots of people around, which was fun for me because everyone kept telling me how pretty and cute I am. They have good taste. Mama's friends Perry and Gorden helped her get me into a box (I think the word I need to use is "indignity") to bring me from Fenstermaker's house to my home.

I didn't know that I would be greeted with bared teeth and deep growls by a monster. It didn't really matter, though. Like any smart girl, I just went about my business and let the boy howl (yeowl, growl, and screech, too) his frustrations out. I may be cute and little, but I'm a girl and that means I know how to run the world.

Which, when it comes to males, almost always means using that cuteness to get under their skin. Apollo is technically an "it" according to Mama (I don't know what that means and frankly, I'm a little afraid to find out), but he's still got the male mentality that females are basically helpless and in need of protection. After, of course, the male has established dominance over the female.

Mama won't let me tell him that he just thinks he's the dominant cat in the house. She says it's better to let the men think they have control than to prove that they don't.

It took 30 days for Apollo to come to terms with my presence. Most of that time, he tried to chase me out of the house. But he also cleaned me up when I was dirty and couldn't quite take care of myself yet, and he always made sure I got enough to eat once I convinced him that I was going to share his food dish. I knew he had accepted me when he very carefully groomed my ears one night.

I'll write more another time about my adventures since he accepted me. Just remember that whatever Apollo writes is less than half the story. He'll never admit it, but I have him wrapped around my little paws very tightly ^x^.

--Serina
as dictated to Mama

September 27, 2006

When Mama went on vacation, Auntie Joanie came to take care of us. Auntie Joanie is very cool - she knows just how to put Apollo in his place and she likes it when I snuggle up under her chin and purr. Auntie Joanie also laughs at Apollo when he does things to make me mad enough to splash him from our water dish.

I couldn't understand why Mama left again after such a short time at home, but Auntie Joanie explained that Mama was away because someone she loved died and she needed to be with her family. It must be very sad to lose someone you love. I know how much I miss Mama when she's gone. If I knew she wasn't coming home, I would be very, very sad.

I don't think I would be as sad if Apollo went away and never came home.

I hope I don't ever find out, actually, but Apollo has been "obnoxious" (that's Mama's word) to me lately. He'll probably tell you that I've been obnoxious to him, but I've been an angel.

Except when I climbed up on the piano and knocked over Mama's pretty flowers and broke the vase.

Except when I claw the couch.

Except when I try to help Mama put on her makeup in the mornings. I don't know why she won't accept my help. Something about wanting her eyeliner around her eyes rather than in her eyes. If she were a cat, she wouldn't need eyeliner. Ours is permanent.

Except when I nearly knocked the antique clock off the shelf. I don't climb on the shelf any more because Mama yelled so loud that she scared me.

But I'm not the one who leapt from the floor onto Mama's back and left a claw mark in her shoulder. And I'm not the one who gets up on the kitchen counter to help Mama load the dishwasher. Nor am I the one who - oh, wait, I am the one who gets too curious about the oven sometimes.

Even though he's being obnoxious to me, I have proof that he loves me very much:



Mama says we look like the Lion and the Lamb on those prayer shawls. I'm the Lamb, in case you're wondering. But you should know that because lambs are cute and little and so am I.

And I still have Apollo wrapped around my little paws. ^x^

--Serina
as dictated to Mama

October 8, 2006

I am the QUEEN of the "catsle" and I have the picture to prove it:



Mama's been busy in the house, which is why she has the ladder right now. At least that's what she thinks. It's really so that I have a high enough perch to attain my proper status as the ruler of the roost.

Apollo won't tell you that, of course. He'll have some other explanation - but you know what to make of what he says.

Anyway, Mama's done a lot of work to get ready for the company we're having in a few weeks. She won't tell us who's coming, but apparently there will be a lot of people here because she's working in every room in the house. Well, except the study. Good thing - that's my favorite hiding place with all the boxes and piles of stuff in there. I have the funny feeling that she'll get that cleaned up shortly too, though, which will mean I'll have to find another hiding place. Maybe behind the couch, now that she's moved it . . .

One thing that hasn't changed is the constant need to supervise Mama while she's preparing our food. She seems to think that she's capable of dishing our dry food on her own, but it is necessary for us to make sure that she does it to Apollo's (and thus my) "exacting specifications". I mean, it would be awful if she accidentally put litter in our food dish or didn't put enough food into it, right? We have learned, however, that getting up on the kitchen counter while she's preparing our wet food is a sure way not to get wet food that day, or at least that morning. It's also a sure way to get a hosing down with the kitchen sink sprayer if Mama has the water on, but I'm sure Apollo won't tell you about that.

He also won't tell you about getting a shower this week. Mama was stroking him one night and came away with dirty hands. So the next morning, she turned on the shower, picked him up, and dumped him in quick. Oh, did he HOWL! But when he was out and all dried, he looked better and Mama doesn't have to wash her hands after she pets him. How did he get so dirty? Well, let's just say that I'm little enough

to duck into certain low places with lots of clearance that he squeezes into with difficulty. Instant dust mop, heh, heh, heh.

I'd find it even funnier if the same thing hadn't happened to me the day before. The sad thing is that it's all my own fault. Mama didn't turn the shower off before she opened the door one morning. I thought she was done, so I jumped in as she stepped out and closed the door behind her. Let me tell you, I was ready when she opened that door!

I'm getting sleepy and Apollo wants his say, so I'd better sign off before he tries to silence me. It's bad enough that he glares at me while I dictate, but I guess he doesn't like anyone contradicting the "King Apollo Version" of life in Schellsburg. Too bad, big brother. You love me because I'm cute, I'm little, and I'm a girl.

And I still have you wrapped around my little paws! ^x^

--Serina
as dictated to Mama

October 24, 2006

Mama's still busy in the house whenever she's around. And she still won't tell us who's coming or when, so I don't know if the house is ever going to be done.

Saturday night she set up a nifty shelf in the kitchen. I think it's a great playset, but apparently she thinks it's for her shoes. I haven't decided if it's worth dumping her shoes off to prove my point, even though it's definitely more fun when it's empty than when it's full. Mama has too many shoes.

Apollo says that it's my fault that we don't get to sleep in Mama's room right now. He says we have to keep trying, though, because one night she might forget to shoo us out and close the door. So far, no luck; last night she picked us both up in the middle of a really great nap and dumped us on the floor in the dressing room before she said goodnight and closed the door. If she loved us as much as she says, she'd let us stay. Apollo says I have to learn to sleep past 4:30 AM before that happens, but I can't help it if my cute little body clock says that 4:30 is a great time to play. I think they should both just deal with it, though Apollo isn't much happier than Mama when I wake him up to play.

There's another new play area in the upstairs hallway. Mama hung several afghans on curtain rods near the window. It's great fun to leap from the windowsill to an afghan and slide down to the floor as the afghan falls off the rod. Unfortunately, I can only do that every so often because Mama has to pick up the afghan from the floor - and I think she's on to me now because she swapped the order around and the one closest to the window doesn't come off the rod. I've tried the other one I can reach, too, but it doesn't slide off as well, either.

Mama had fresh flowers in the house for us to play with, too. I don't think she was that happy to see so many of them on the floor when she came home yesterday, but she wasn't home long enough to clean up the pieces.

I think Mama's working too hard, but then, anyone who spends more time awake than asleep works too hard. You humans have a lot to learn from us cats. Especially those of us who are cute, little, and girls.

Even Apollo could learn something from me, I think. He still hasn't learned not to get on the kitchen counter, though I learned from watching him get sprayed with the sink sprayer. But I guess it's hard for a handsome, big boy like him to take lessons from a cute little girl like me.

Especially when I have him wrapped around my little paws ^x^

--Serina
as dictated to Mama

October 30, 2006

Mama cleaned the study this week. Aunt Joanie came to help her on Friday and they were very busy. The study isn't quite done and my favorite perch is still in the blue bedroom, but the rest of the house looks beautiful. Mama has worked very, very hard to make it that way, especially her bedroom. She has lots of pillows on her bed when she makes it up now, and it's a lot of fun to hide in them to nap during the day.

And now we know why because Aunt Joanie spilled the beans! Grandma and Grandpa are coming on Saturday! Apollo is even more excited about other guests who are coming, but I think I better let him tell you or else he might not let me curl up with him tonight on Mama's bed.

Yes, we're sleeping with Mama again. She decided to try it when the time changed because she figured she would get another hour's sleep if I woke her up in the middle of the night to play. But Apollo made it very clear that if I did that, Mama would have to stand in line behind him because he really hates not sleeping with her. I was a good girl; Mama woke me up when she rolled over to look at the clock at 7:30 Sunday morning. And I was just stretching when she rolled over to check the clock at 7:45 this morning. I hope I can be good for a long time because I like sleeping with her, too.

We had a party Saturday night and I had a human playmate. Five year old humans have almost as much energy as kittens - I was pretty tired when they all left for the play. But I took a nap and was ready to play again before bed when Mama came home. Mama said my playmate fell asleep halfway through the play, so I must have worn her out, too.

The Prayer Shawl ladies are coming tomorrow morning to work. We're supposed to be on our best behavior, especially when everyone is knitting or crocheting. If we aren't good, we're going to have to stay out on the utility porch until they leave. I'll try my best, but Mama doesn't really know how hard the temptation of yarn is to resist. It's almost as bad as catnip.

Mama actually got to watch some football this week. She was happy that Pittsburgh lost and that Dallas and New England won (take that, Chris Collinsworth! I didn't like his prediction that Minnesota would win 24-7 any more than Mama did.) It's fun to watch football with her because she talks to the television. I wonder if Grandma and Grandpa like football? The Patriots are playing the Colts Sunday night and I know how much Mama dislikes the Colts and loves the Patriots. It will be fun to watch with her and maybe listen to her talk to another human being instead of the television.

My big brother is growling at my cute little self because I'm hogging Mama's time. Mama says to say that I might not get to dictate for the next couple of weeks because she's going to be very busy. I'll remember all the fun things to tell you, though, so don't worry about missing anything.

Especially anything that makes Apollo realize that I still have him wrapped around my cute little paws.
^x^.

Serina
(as dictated to Mama)

November 14, 2006

Whew! What a busy time we've had! Mama can't even complain that the house is a mess because of us - it's really not that bad, just lived in by five more people than usual. Five very nice people who treated me, for the most part, like the little princess I am.

After they paid the obeisance Apollo demanded, of course. Whether he deserves it or not. He's an attention hog.

When Grandma and Grandpa arrived, he wouldn't let me near them until they had submitted to his scrutiny. And the only reason I got to be in their bedroom is because they had twin beds; he couldn't protect both beds at the same time. But he would only let me stay with them at night for a little while, not overnight, and I wasn't to curl up beside either of them. I could sleep on Grandma's feet and walk over Grandpa, though.

Apollo wouldn't let me on the couch when Grandma was crocheting, either. And when Mama left us alone with them all day, he decided to show how upset he was with Mama by staying away from Grandma and Grandpa - and when I wanted to go be with them, he wouldn't leave me alone to find them. I had to give him attention since he didn't want it from Grandma and Grandpa. So much for having him wrapped around my little paws. ^-^

Apollo was even more obnoxious to me when Tom and Pat arrived. He was upset that they smelled like another cat; he said he feels like he's been cheated on by both Mama and by his favorite cat sitters. Mama says he's got fidelity issues, but he's just going to have to deal with them on his own because she's not going to find a pet psychologist to help him cope. What I want to know is if there's such a thing as a "catsoral" counselor. Maybe Mama would go for that instead, since it would be a little closer to what she does as a pastor.

As for what happened when Apollo's beloved Bill arrived, well...

Let's just say that I think the only reasons we're still alive are that Bill doesn't have a violent bone in his body and that he knows how unhappy Mama would have been if we had suddenly disappeared.

I wanted to curl up on the bed next to Bill. I've never slept with a man before and I thought it would be interesting to find out what that's like.

Apollo was having none of that, though. He was thoroughly upset with Bill for having another cat's smell on him, too - the same one as Tom and Pat, of course. No way was Apollo going to share HIS favorite human with any other cat, especially since he's had to share Mama with me for almost five months now. So Thursday night, Apollo sat guard over Bill's bed and every time I tried to get up on it, he came after me. All night long. Mama says she could hear Bill tossing and turning and the occasional hiss and growl from us several times even in the next room.

I think it was payback for both Bill and me, truthfully. Bill for infidelity and me for having the audacity (like my new word? I don't have to listen to NPR everyday to develop my vocabulary!) to exist.

I personally think I'd like to meet Tuckey someday. He sounds like a much friendlier beast than that thing I'm stuck with for a big brother. But I doubt I'll ever get to North Attleboro, so I probably won't meet him in my lifetime. Maybe in my 10th life.

The big beast got over his fit of pique (another new vocabulary word!), at least a little, and we went on to have some adventures being thrown off the dining room table, chased off of kitchen counters, and

shoed away from open doors. Tom and Pat and Grandpa and Mama practiced a hymn with Mama's friend Pam playing the piano, which was wonderful because Pam plays MUCH better than Mama.

Pam's son Steve is very sweet, but I think he's allergic to us because he went through a lot of tissues while he was at the house. Apollo actually let Steve pet him, which was pretty amazing, but Apollo says he knew Steve a little bit from Attleboro.

Mama had a whole bunch of people over on Saturday night, including her friends Perry and Gorden, who helped her bring me here when I was a very little kitten. She and Grandpa sang for us and Grandma sang along. It was funny when Grandpa told her she'd have to sing with them in church on Sunday morning if she kept singing while they practiced with Pam. Did I say that Pam plays the piano much better than Mama already?

Sunday afternoon and evening were just hang out time. Grandpa and Tom watched football while Grandma and Pat did their yarn work. Bill didn't feel good, but he managed to sit in the kitchen to talk with Mama while she organized and straightened and even when she made pizzas for everyone else. They all went to bed early because they all got up really early. Imagine my surprise when Mama left with not just her briefcase but her knitting bag and a suitcase, too!

Further imagine my surprise when Aunt Joanie didn't come by Monday afternoon to check on us, since it was apparent that Mama had departed for an overnight. But she came this morning to see us and apologized for leaving us on our own for the day. She had a stomach bug that kept her from enjoying the events of the weekend and from seeing us. But she's feeling better today, which is what really matters.

So we finally got our big celebration and our visit with everybody. I had a lot of fun along the way, even if I did have to put up with a grumpy big brother some of the time. And now I know why Apollo likes Tom and Pat so much. They're very nice cat-loving people. As to Bill, well...

I can't claim him as my favorite human because of Mama and Aunt Joanie. But he is my favorite male human. Even if he did discover my deep, dark secret and announce it to the world.

But more about that if the vet (Mama says it's not the kind of vet that Grandpa and Tom are, but I don't really understand that) confirms it.

In the mean time, I'm resting up from our adventures and hoping for more soon. Apollo says the next thing we have on our calendar is Christmas, but he won't tell me what that means. Maybe he's wondering how different it will be here than it was in Attleboro!

I'm still cute and I'm still little and I'm still a girl - at least, I will say that I'm all of those things until one or more of them are proven untrue. But I'm afraid I don't have Apollo wrapped around my little paws anymore. ^-^

Serina
(as dictated to Mama)

December 20, 2006

I already know what you're going to hear from Apollo about the untoward delay in having our say. He's not as likely to let Mama off lightly as I am, but then, I'm a girl, so I know all about being the one who has to do all the work. At least, I'm still a girl as far as I know. Mama has been so busy that she hasn't taken me to the vet yet, which is okay with me if half of what the big Orange Beast of AAARRRRRRGGGGGH says is true.

We've had a lot of adventures since Mama last sat still long enough to take dictation. When everyone left us after such a houseful, Aunt Joanie was taking care of us and our friend Catie was here with her mom and brother and sister to use Mama's shower for several days, even after Mama came home. I liked playing with Catie, but Apollo was snooty and wouldn't spend any time with them. He wasn't happy with me when I played with her instead of him, but he can just tough it out. He's not the center of the universe.

I am.

And when Aunt Joanie came back for a few days after Mama was home for a few days, I really was the center of the universe because she likes me better. Apollo tried to play nice-nice when he wanted attention, but she still loves me more. I wondered where Mama went, but as soon as she walked in the door smelling like Tuckey, I knew that meant she went to see Bill and Tom and Pat.

And then things got really crazy. Mama started decorating for Christmas. And decorating and decorating and decorating.

To the point that I sometimes had to do obnoxious things to get her attention. She caught me at it a few times, too. Once, she even got my most innocent look on camera:



I don't really know what I wasn't doing when she took that picture, but it's a safe bet she hadn't just shooed me off the table.

I really like the Christmas decorations. Mama put bells on our cat condo, which are a lot of fun to play with. I like the ornaments on the tree better, though. And the best place is the table with the punchbowl because I can look out the window there. Mama put candles in the windowsills and took away all my favorite first floor perches. She wasn't happy when Apollo knocked the stuff out of one window, so I decided I'd better not imitate him.

He got me in BIG trouble one day, even when I didn't imitate him. We were playing chase, which always takes us up the front stairs, in and out of every room upstairs, down the back stairs (which this time included sliding on the tree skirt under the kitchen Christmas tree), and through the kitchen and dining room to the couch in the living room. Only this time, he didn't chase me to the couch. He chased me up into the middle of the Christmas tree.

It was humiliating. Mama had to come and get me out, then she scolded me for a long time before she let me go. If Apollo could put his paws on his hips and shake his claw, he would have done it to mock Mama - but he was quick to run when he realized that she knew it was all his fault. I don't understand why I got scolded if she knew it was his fault.

Apollo said that Mama was doing a lot more decorating here than she ever did back in Attleboro. He was getting a little worried wondering why because he couldn't think of any particular reason. Since I don't understand Christmas, I didn't have any ideas, either.

Until Saturday.

Mama had a bunch of people over late Saturday morning, which was kind of neat. A lot of them smelled like dogs, which isn't great but it's livable. Perry and Gorden were here, too, which I thought meant a party. But none of them were here for long. Mama scurried around with her friend Sandy putting stuff on the kitchen counters, then Mama tricked us onto the utility porch with our food and closed us in there with our lunch.

This wasn't all that bad, honestly. We had food and water and a laundry basket of clean clothes in which to sleep. But Apollo didn't like hearing lots of people in the kitchen when he couldn't supervise them. This went on until almost dark and by then, Apollo was howling to get out. I just curled up and went back to sleep until Mama finally let us out.

Apollo made it very clear that the proper treatment for Mama at that point was the cold shoulder and tail. I kind of see why, if you must know the truth. It's vitally important to us felines that we be able to monitor what happens in our "catsle" and to be shut away while strangers are in our home, well...that's just human insensitivity. So I agreed with Apollo that we needed to emphasize our unhappiness during the party Saturday night, too. It was probably mean to walk away from Mama whenever we saw her, but how would you react to being locked up for 4 hours? I saw Fenstermaker, who fussed over me, and made a lot of new friends who told me how beautiful I am.

And I got shooed off the dining room table a few times, too. But, really, Mama shouldn't put out shrimp if she doesn't want us on the table. Or chocolate covered cream puffs, either.

Apollo figured that one night of the cold shoulder and tail would teach Mama a good lesson, so he made me sleep downstairs instead of with Mama on Saturday night.

He was wrong.

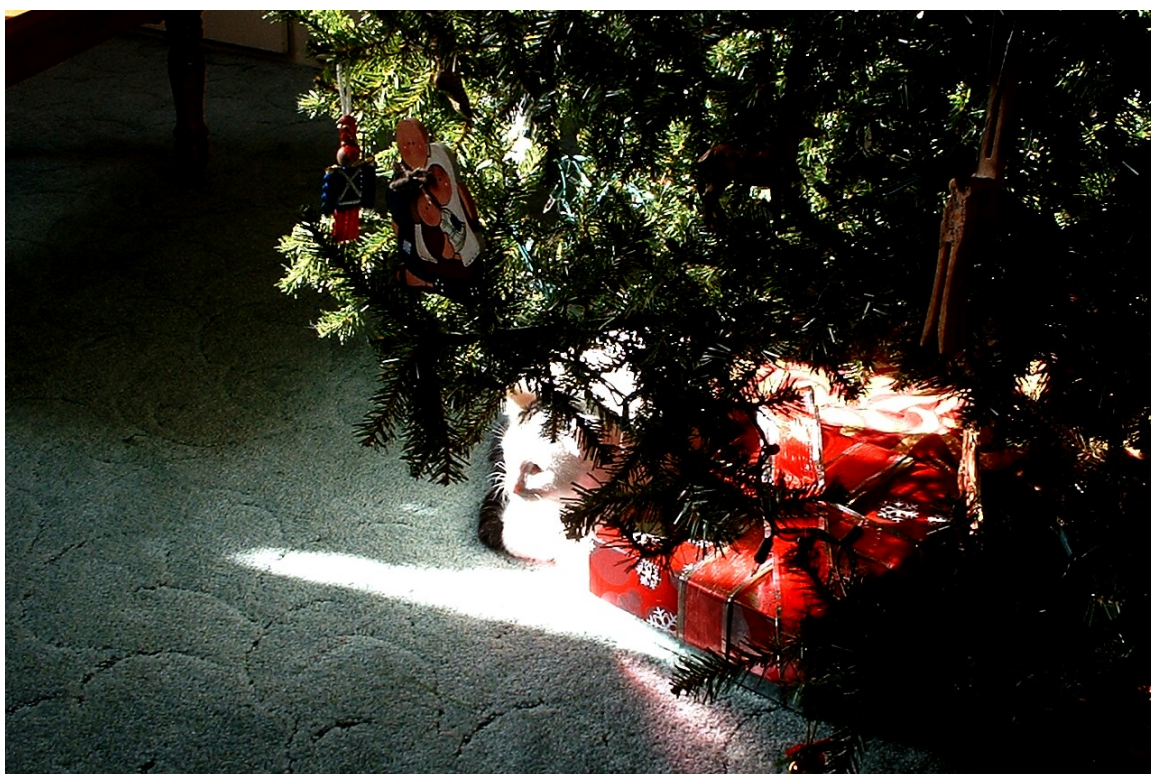
Not only was he wrong, he was blindsided when it happened again on Sunday!

Mama tried the same trick with our wet food on Sunday as she did on Saturday and Apollo fell for it. I realized what was going to happen and made a break for it, but I didn't run fast enough. We spent another 4 hours on the utility porch that afternoon. Apollo made sure many more people heard how unhappy he was that day than he had on Saturday, but I found the laundry basket and took another terrific nap until Mama let us out and left the house.

By the time Mama was home to stay early Monday morning, Apollo was willing to forgive her. But he wanted her all to himself, so I still had to sleep downstairs overnight. Thankfully, Mama stayed home and worked with her feet up almost all day on Monday, so we both got lots of snuggling time with her.

Grandma and Grandpa sent us a package with two books and other presents, but Mama hasn't had time to read the books to us when we've both been together. Maybe tomorrow she will. And maybe the books will help me understand Christmas as more than a time to get locked up on the porch when people come to see the house.

Whatever Christmas is, I like the tree. And don't I look cute and little under the tree in the sun with the package?



One more note: I've learned a new trick that drives Mama crazy. The toilet seats are very light and I'm just tall enough to push them up with my head and stick myself down to drink water from the toilets. Apollo says it's nasty, but he likes to lick the water out of the shower and the bathroom sink - so who is he to judge?

Merry Christmas, everyone - and Mama says I have to say Happy Hanukkah, too!

Serina

(as dictated to Mama)

December 31, 2006

Just a quick note to say that I think I look wonderful in my Hollywood debut, don't you? If you had problems viewing the movie on the homepage or you have Windows Media Viewer or something else that will play files with the .wmv extension, you can try your luck with a slightly different version by clicking on the file below:

[Editor's note – the film is available at The Underbrush via an embedded Youtube file.]

Apollo, on the other hand, comes off looking like the big bullying brute he is in his movie debut over at the Shrubbery. Ask me if I'm surprised. ^x^

Mama says I have to let her reformat my blog, so you can expect some changes in the next couple of weeks. She says she's going to redesign the entire site, but I'll believe it when I see it. I think she's too busy to pull it off, personally!

Happy New Year to all my fans! And to Apollo, too, I suppose...

Serina

(as dictated to Mama)